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INFO RUEHFK/AMCONSUL FUKUOKA 9936  
RUEHOK/AMCONSUL OSAKA KOBE 3420  
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 5859  
RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW 1523  
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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION - CHENEY VISIT - TOKYO

LEAD STORIES: Thursday morning's Asahi front-paged the meeting between visiting Vice President Cheney and Prime Minister Abe Wednesday at the Kantei.

1. "Cheney-Abe Meeting: We Welcome Their Agreement to Address the Abduction Issue as a Common Task" The conservative Sankei editorialized (2/22): "Vice President Cheney wound up his visit to Japan after meeting Wednesday with Prime Minister Abe, Foreign Minister Aso, and other senior officials. Cheney and Abe reaffirmed close US-Japan cooperation toward a comprehensive solution to the North Korean abduction and nuclear issues. It is significant that the two leaders agreed to address the abduction issue as a common task.... There is, however, lingering concern over the fact that a meeting between the vice president and Defense Minister Kyuma did not take place. Though a Cheney-Kyuma meeting was not realized, reportedly due to difficulty in coordinating their schedules, Cheney expressed his deep appreciation for the Air Self-Defense Force's airlift operations in Iraq and the Maritime Self-Defense Force's refueling operations in the Indian Ocean during his talks with Abe and other GOJ officials. We cannot help but wonder whether there was no meeting with Kyuma because of America's displeasure with his recent remarks critical of the US decision to launch the Iraq war and the US position on the relocation of the functions of Marine Corps Air Station Futenma in Okinawa."

2. "Why Didn't Cheney Talk with Citizens or Meet the Press?" An editorial in the liberal Asahi stated (2/22): "While visiting foreign countries, leaders generally do their best to 'sell' their foreign policies and their nation's products. Vice President Cheney did not do so. During his stay in Japan, the vice president addressed US

Navy personnel on board the USS Kitty Hawk at Yokosuka Naval Base and met with Prime Minister Abe. He was to meet the parents of Japanese abductee Megumi Yokota before leaving Thursday morning for Australia. He did not, however, speak with Japanese citizens or the local press. At his meeting with PM Abe, Cheney expressed appreciation for Japan's cooperation in Afghanistan and Iraq, and the two leaders confirmed the importance of the US-Japan alliance. As is the case in the US, public opinion in Japan is critical of the Iraq war. We wonder why the vice president did not seize the opportunity to explain the US decision to send more troops to Iraq.... Speculation is rife in the US and European media that America may attack Iran, although the USG has dismissed the possibility. At this critical juncture, we wanted to hear directly from the number-two official in the Bush administration on how the US intends to deal with Iran."

SCHIEFFER